

REMARKS

Claims 1-21 and 25-27 are pending. No new matter has been added by way of the above amendments. For instance, claim 21 has been amended to more clearly define the suitable uses as well as structure of the matrix claims. Support can be found at page 1, lines 20-32, page 13, lines 16-19 of the present specification. Further reference may be given to Figure 6 of the present application. Also, small typographical errors have been corrected in claims 14 and 17. Claims 22-24 have been cancelled, claims 25 and 26 have been clarified, and new claim 27 has been added. Accordingly, no new matter has been added.

Favorable action on the merits is respectfully solicited.

Unity of Invention Requirement

In the outstanding Office Action the Examiner has required Applicants to elect one of the following groups of claims:

Group I, claims 1-20, directed to a method of manufacturing a matrix; and

Group II, claims 21-26, directed to a matrix.

Applicants respectfully traverse this Unity of Invention Requirement.

The Examiner asserts that the inventions listed as Groups I and II do not relate to a single general inventive concept under PCT Rule 13.1 since they lack the same or corresponding special technical features. The Examiner provides evidence of a lack of

special technical feature by referencing United States Patent 5,538,674, issued to Nisper et al. Applicants traverse and submit that the Examiner has made no attempt to apply the teachings of the Nisper reference to that of the presently claimed invention. As such, the Examiner has failed to shift the burden to Applicants. Moreover, Applicants respectfully submit that no undue burden exists for the Examiner to search and consider all currently pending claims. Reconsideration and withdrawal of this unity of invention requirement is requested.

However, in effort to be fully responsive to the outstanding unity of invention requirement, Applicants hereby elect the claims of Group II. In view of the present amendments, Applicants submit that the claims belonging to Group II are claims 21, 25, 26 and 27. Favorable action on the merits is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner has any questions or comments, please contact Craig A. McRobbie, Registration No. 42,874 at the offices of Birch, Stewart, Kolasch & Birch, LLP.


If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional

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fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under § 1.17;
particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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